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Agenda item 6

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Written statement submitted by the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[10 August 1994]

Human rights situation of the Muslims of Sanjak

1. With the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and the creation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the basic human rights and freedoms of the Muslims of Sanjak are being gravely violated. The new Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of 27 April 1992 excludes Muslims as a nation, depriving them of the right to be a nation, they who were one of the biggest nations in the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, the Muslim people of Sanjak boycotted all elections in Serbia and Montenegro.

2. Since the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the human rights of the Muslims in Sanjak have been violated even more. In the period from 1992 to 1993, 44 Muslims have been killed and 181 abducted; 317 houses, business premises and other buildings have been set on fire or destroyed with explosive devices. Because of such terror almost all the Muslim population has fled from the border area with Bosnia to safer places. In the region of Pljevlja and Priboj, 46 villages and 5 settlements have been completely "ethnically cleansed".

3. Fears have increased among the Muslims after the extensive deployment of military and police forces with weapons in Sanjak. This has been accompanied by increasingly serious threats by Serbian and Montenegrin party leaders through the Government-controlled media.

4. Tensions decreased after the CSCE mission was stationed in Sanjak in October 1992, in spite of the fact that the mission did not manage to fulfil its task or its limited mandate completely. For example, the CSCE observers visited no villages or settlements on the border with Bosnia, where "ethnic cleansing" had been carried out.

5. After the CSCE mission had to leave Sanjak on 28 June 1993, military and police terror increased again. Mass warrantless searches, mistreatments and arbitrary arrests, as well as tortures, started again. Approximately 3,400 arbitrary arrests, summons or searches have been carried out in every Sanjak region. In almost all cases people have been tortured when interrogated.

6. Serbian authorities issued a warrant for the arrest and a search warrant against the President of the Muslim National Council of Sanjak, Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin, on 14 September 1993, while he was at a conference in Geneva.

7. In the period from 27 to 31 January 1994, the entire Muslim leadership of Montenegro was arrested - among them the President of the Democratic Action Party for Montenegro, Harun Hadzic, and General Secretary Rasim Sahman. All of them have been tortured and blackmailed.

8. For the time being, political trials against 50 Muslims are continuing - against 25 before the District Court in Novi Pazar (Serbia) and against 25 before the District Court in Bijelo Polje (Montenegro). They are charged with illegal possession of weapons and the endangering of the territorial integrity of the State, charges which are groundless since their confessions have been extracted by beatings and the Law on Criminal Procedure has been gravely violated.

9. All evidence about this violation of human rights is found at the secretariat of the Muslim National Council and the Sanjak Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, Novi Pazar, as well as in the Report of the Humanitarian Law Fund from Belgrade.

10. The Muslim National Council of Sanjak requests from the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia and the Contact Group the following:

(a) The issue of Sanjak to be put on the Conference's agenda and the status of the Muslims in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the former Yugoslavia to be solved as part of the overall settlement;

(b) The CSCE mission, composed of at least 10 observers, to be urgently sent to Sanjak with a broadened mandate to undertake measures to prevent terror against the Muslims and preventing conflict;

(c) UNPROFOR to be deployed in Sanjak to prevent conflict;

(d) The political trials against the Muslims of Sanjak to be abolished;

(e) Demilitarization of Sanjak;

(f) To abolish the search warrant against the President of the Muslim National Council of Sanjak, Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin, and make it possible for him to return to the country.